

“Obstacles to Godliness,” - 2 Corinthians 6:11-18 – October 23rd, 2016

- The title I've chosen for today's teaching is, "Obstacles to Godliness."
- Here in the remainder of this chapter, the Apostle Paul is speaking very openly and truthfully to the carnal Corinthian Christians.
- So much so that he puts his finger on the very specific issues that had become obstacles hindering them from living a godly life.

1. Loving self too much (Verses 11-13)

- v11 Paul sort of cries out to them saying, O Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you, and our hearts were open wide to you.
- v12 He says they've not withheld their affection from the Corinthian Christians rather, it was them who had withheld it from Paul.
- v13 Paul then pleads with them as his children, to open wide their hearts also, in return, for Paul opening up his heart to them.

- What Paul is saying here is that the Corinthian Christians were acting as if they were the victims who were hurt by Paul himself.
- This because, Paul had been very blunt and firm with them concerning their carnality, so much so, they were greatly offended.
- This is why Paul pleads with them to not withhold their affection, which they were doing under the banner of holding a grudge.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the main reasons for unresolved conflict amongst Christians, this would be it.
- Sadly, many a Christian, have been unnecessarily offended by someone who actually loved them enough to speak the truth.
- It's rather ironic that the Christian on the receiving end of the truth in love usually accuses the one who spoke truth as unloving.

In Ephesians 4:15 the Apostle Paul exhorts the Christians in Ephesus to speak the truth in love so they may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Of this one commentator said, "We are drawn to a crackling fire in a fireplace on a cold winter night because it provides both light and warmth. And such is the perfect combination of truth and love. Truth without love is like the light of a fire without warmth. Love without truth is like the heat of a fire without light. Truth without love makes people cold in the light. Love without truth makes people stumble in the dark. Thus, we need both."

Proverbs 27:6 (NKJV) — 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

- One of the lessons I'm learning in my own personal walk with the Lord is that I'm wounded by the truth because of my self-love.
- I would suggest that self is easily offended and wounded when I hear the truth about myself, proportionate to my love of self.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that absent dying to self and love of self, reconciliation with others is not likely to happen.

I like how one commentator summed it up, The Corinthian Christians played the "victim" before Paul. Out of godly necessity he was firm with them on previous occasions. Now, they probably claimed to be restricted by the "hurt" Paul caused them. They probably said, "We would love to reconcile with you Paul, but the pain you caused us restricts us. We just can't get over it." But the real problem was that the Corinthian Christians were restricted by [their] own affections. It wasn't that Paul did not love them enough (which was their claim as "victims"). It was that they loved too much! Their own affections restricted them. What did they love too much? First, they loved the world too much, and Paul will deal with that love in following verses. They also loved themselves too much and refused to really deal with their selfish and worldly attitudes towards Paul.

2. Loving the world too much (Verses 14-16)

- v14 Paul says don't be yoked with unbelievers asking what fellowship do righteousness or light have with the wicked darkness?
- v15 He asks, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial, or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?
- v16 He quotes from Ezekiel 37 saying we're the temple of the living God Who lives with us and walks amongst us as His people.

- What Paul is saying here in these verses is we, like the Corinthian Christians, have the propensity to love the world too much.
- It's important to understand that Paul is not saying we as Christians are never to associate with the non-Christian in the world.
- Rather, we are to be in the world but not of the world, in the sense that we are not unduly influenced by the things of this world.

I like how one commentator said it, "This speaks especially to the issue of influence. Paul is not suggesting that Christians never associate with unbelievers (he makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13). The principle is that we are to be in the world, but not of the world, like a ship should be in the water, but water shouldn't be in the ship. If the world is influencing us, it is clear we are unequally yoked together with unbelievers. And this unequal yoke, or ungodly influence, may come through a book, a movie, a television show, a magazine, or even through worldly Christian friends. Most Christians are far too indiscriminate about the things they allow to influence their minds and lives.

3. Loving fleshly desires too much (Verses 17-18)

- v17 Paul quotes Isaiah 52:11 saying come out and be separate and touch no unclean thing so that the Lord will receive them.
- v18 He then refers to Jeremiah 31:9 saying God will be a Father to them and they in turn will become His sons and daughters.
- What Paul is saying here is that our love for worldly and fleshly desires can empty us of our love for God and for God's people.

I'll close with a quote from Alan Redpath who of this wrote, "It is not a question simply of trying to empty your heart and life of every worldly desire—what an awful impossibility! It is rather opening your heart wide to all the love of God in Christ, and letting that love just sweep through you and exercise its expulsive power till your heart is filled with love."